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Preparing for the Unthinkable: DOD Support to Foreign Consequence Management

by

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Lieutenant, United States Navy

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

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ABSTRACT

The United States Government (USG) has been extremely active in preparing for a domestic WMD attack, especially after the 9/11 attacks in 2001, which has led to a robust capability to respond to WMD attacks within U.S. borders. Unfortunately, the USG has not invested as much time addressing the issue of a WMD attack in a foreign country and what the USG response would be. Although some work has been done, such as establishing joint doctrine and conducting multinational exercises, the USG and specifically the DOD and GCCs are not optimally prepared to conduct Foreign Consequence Management (FCM) operations. Therefore, the DOD and GCCs must work toward building a more robust capability and establishing the required relationships necessary to successfully mitigate the consequences of a WMD attack.

FCM operations address very complex problem sets with no easy solutions. Such operations will inevitably involve dozens of agencies and organizations, not to mention one or more foreign governments that may not have even begun to think about such unimaginable events. Therefore, it is imperative that GCCs plan for their response to these events before they happen. A well thought out plan with a solid operational scheme will be an essential jumping off point for conducting FCM operations.

INTRODUCTION

"The single biggest threat that we face is a nuclear weapon or some weapon of mass destruction." -Barak Obama

While use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) may be the single biggest threat the world faces today, the possibility of these weapons actually being used is still very small. This is because there are a multitude of treaties, initiatives and organizations established to prevent the proliferation of these types of weapons. What is compelling about a WMD event is not its likelihood, but the amount of human devastation a single such event would cause. The consequences make any possibility, however remote, too high to ignore. Thus, the United States Government (USG), and specifically the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCCs), must be ready at any time to respond to WMD use anywhere in the world.

In 1995, President Clinton issued Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 39, which introduced the term consequence management into the USG lexicon: the ability to "respond to the consequences of terrorism directed against large populations". Since then, the consequence management field has been split up into two categories: Domestic Consequence Management of WMD attacks and Foreign Consequence Management of WMD attacks. The United States Government (USG) has been extremely active in preparing for a domestic WMD attack, especially after the 9/11 attacks in 2001, which has led to a robust capability to respond to WMD attacks within U.S. borders. Unfortunately, the USG has not invested as much time addressing the issue of a WMD attack in a foreign country and what the USG response would be. Although some work has been done, such as establishing joint doctrine and conducting multinational exercises, the USG and specifically the DOD and GCCs are not optimally prepared to conduct Foreign Consequence Management (FCM) operations.

Therefore, the DOD and GCCs must work toward building a more robust capability and establishing the required relationships necessary to successfully mitigate the consequences of a WMD attack.

FCM operations address very complex problem sets with no easy solutions. Such operations will inevitably involve dozens of agencies and organizations, not to mention one or more foreign governments that may not have even begun to think about such unimaginable events. Therefore, it is imperative that GCCs plan for their response to these events before they happen. A well thought out plan with a solid operational scheme will be an essential jumping off point for conducting FCM operations.

An operational scheme is the broad outline that strengthens an operational plan and its subsequent execution.³ Since FCM operations will involve a multitude of disparate organizations with a wide spectrum of capabilities, an operational scheme must be developed that includes a mechanism for establishing the required interagency and foreign government relationships that must exist prior to any WMD attack occurring. These relationships will be the foundation that enables all parties involved in FCM operations to share information and work together toward a common goal, which is the rapid and effective mitigation of the consequences of a WMD attack.

This paper will address the unique operational challenges that GCCs must deal with when conducting FCM operations. Toward this end the paper will briefly discuss what FCM is and why unity of effort is so critical in conducting it. It will then describe and analyze the operational factors and functions as they apply to FCM operations. Finally, it will offer some alternatives, moving forward, to optimize FCM execution by enhancing relationships and streamlining the overlapping roles, functions, and responsibilities of the military, interagency

organizations, and foreign governments involved in planning and executing these difficult operations.

BACKGROUND

Since the end of the Cold War, the chance of the world falling into a nuclear winter after an exchange of hundreds of nuclear weapons between the United States and Soviet Union has drastically declined, if not been eliminated. The environment of mutually assured destruction did not require a capability for consequence management because the devastation would have been simply unmanageable. Although the threat of global nuclear winter is nearly past, the threat of a single nuclear, chemical, or biological terrorist attack still exists.⁴ The consequences of such events can and must be mitigated rapidly and effectively.

In fact, the USG's capability to mitigate these single attacks will help deter the use of these weapons. If a state or non-state actor understands that using these weapons will not produce the desired results, e.g. the collapse of a government or economy, they may be less likely to use them. Thus, it is crucial that the GCCs be prepared to respond to WMD related events, especially in a foreign country where would-be perpetrators may perceive that there is a greater chance they can use such weapons successfully to achieve overall objectives.

UNITY OF EFFORT

According to Joint Publication 3-41, *Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High Yield Explosives Consequence Management*, "FCM is assistance provided by the USG to a host nation (HN) to mitigate the effects of a deliberate or inadvertent chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or high-yield explosive (CBRNE) attack or event and to restore essential government services." One can envision from this definition how difficult FCM operations will be to plan for and execute. FCM operations will be conducted by the

USG, and will include dozens of agencies and organizations, only one of which may be the DOD, whose participation is orchestrated by the GCCs. Since FCM operations will assist a HN on its sovereign soil, the HN will have the final say on how the operation will be conducted. Ultimately, the complexity of FCM operations, combined with the number of players involved, each with differing procedures and agendas, will make it nearly impossible to obtain unity of effort. At the same time, unity of effort in such dire, time-constrained circumstances will be absolutely critical for success.

What makes planning for FCM operations so difficult is that events to trigger them have never really taken place. No nuclear weapons have been used since 1945, when the United States dropped atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. There have been no successful large scale chemical or biological attacks on population centers. How can USG organizations prepare for an unthinkable event with no lessons learned or previous experience upon which to draw?

Ultimate responsibility for FCM operations will rest with the HN government, but where USG participation is involved, the Department of State (DOS) will be the lead federal agency (LFA) to coordinate FCM operations.⁶ This is a crucial and extremely challenging role, because in order for FCM operations to be successful they must be "strategically integrated and operationally and tactically coordinated with the activities of other agencies of the USG, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), regional organizations, foreign militaries, and activities of various HN agencies." The involvement of all of these entities would likely make it impossible to establish unity of command. Consequently, the main focus when preparing and planning for FCM operations must be on establishing unity of effort.

There is no doubt that unity of effort will be extremely difficult to obtain when conducting FCM operations. Thus, the relationships required for success must be established now, before a WMD attack occurs. The overall desired end state for FCM operations is to neutralize, contain and reduce the effects of a WMD attack across the physical, virtual and human dimensions. Since this desired end state will be common to all agencies, organizations and governments involved in FCM operations, it provides a useful catalyst for unity of effort, as well as a starting point for identifying the key players and their roles. Once that is accomplished, relationships can be developed over time that will facilitate the overall decision making process involved in this complex problem set.

It should be reiterated that the DOS is the LFA for USG FCM operations, while DOD is in a supporting role. The GCCs must understand that in this support role for FCM they will be more facilitator than commander, and more diplomat than warrior. Operating with this mindset, instead of a traditional military approach, might be the most important step the GCCs can take to establish unity of effort in FCM operations.

OPERATIONAL FACTORS

In order to fully understand the complexity of FCM operations, we must first understand what exactly will be the nature of the problem. An analysis of the operational factors of time, space and force as they apply to FCM operations will put the problem in the proper perspective and aid thinking pursuant to successful execution.

Factor Time. Napoleon I said that "the loss of time is irreparable in war…operations only fail through delays." Time will be the enemy in FCM operations and, to successfully defeat this enemy, an operational commander must prepare extensively prior to FCM-triggering events commencing. Comprehensive planning is critical. All the agencies,

organizations and foreign governments that will take part in FCM operations will need to understand their roles and responsibilities thoroughly. This will help to ensure a rapid response to an unthinkable event. In the end, FCM operations will be judged by how quickly a response force is in place and how many lives it saves.

Another aspect of factor time in FCM operations is the whole host of relationships that must be developed. These relationships, if honestly pursued, will build trust and cultural understanding over time. The time to start building these relationships is now, because once FCM operations are necessary, there will be no more time; indeed, a WMD event will so severely stress existing relationships that trust and understanding will have to be solidified well beforehand.

Finally, showing mastery of factor time in FCM operations will be a deterrent to WMD use. The 2006 National Security Strategy states that the United States will provide "...improved protection to mitigate the consequences of WMD use. We aim to convince our adversaries that they cannot achieve their goals with WMD, and thus deter and dissuade them from attempting to use or even acquire these weapons in the first place." This deterrence can only be effective if a rapid response is demonstrably in place through sound doctrine and proper training and exercises.

Factor Space. The factor of space encompasses land, sea and air as well as human space. ("Human factor space" includes the political system and nature of government, population size and density, ideologies, tradition, and culture. ¹³) This human factor space will be a key focus in conducting FCM operations. Operational-level leaders, such as a Joint Task Force Commanders, Joint Force Commanders, or GCCs, will need to consider how to

handle a large number of displaced persons, deal with the affected foreign government, and disseminate information to the general public that will prevent widespread panic.

Another aspect of factor space that must be addressed is the geographic area that may be affected by the WMD attack. Depending on what type of WMD is used (chemical, biological, or nuclear), the size of the contaminated area can vary greatly. It will be critical that the boundaries of the affected area be delineated as soon as possible. Once the boundaries are known, it can be determined where medical facilities will be set up to identify and treat the affected population without creating casualties out of healthy responders.

but more importantly the non-military – i.e. civilian - "force." The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) will deploy a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART);¹⁴ the DOS will use a Foreign Emergency Support Team (FEST) in coordination with the Consequence Management Support Team (CMST); and the Department of Energy has several assets that will provide expertise in FCM operations, including the Consequence Management Planning Team (CMPT) and Nuclear Emergency Support Team (NEST).¹⁵ All of these specialized "forces" are trained, equipped, on-call, and essential for successful FCM operations because they can respond into a contaminated environment without becoming victims themselves.¹⁶ Since DOD forces, such as the U.S. Marine Corps's Chemical and Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF), may not be available (their deployment overseas may leave the homeland unprepared for a WMD attack), it is essential that operational leaders understand what capabilities these specialized civilian "forces" can bring to FCM operations.¹⁷

OPERATIONAL FUNCTIONS

All military operations have a number of supporting structures and activities, categorized into "operational functions," which should be fully organized and developed to achieve maximum effectiveness during the operation. FCM operations are no different and will involve several intuitive, if non-traditional, functions: preparation and assessment; logistics; medical resolutions; public affairs; security; and command, control and coordination. All of these functions must be considered when planning and executing FCM operations. Synchronization and integration of these functions across FCM operations is the most important leadership responsibility at the operational level.

Preparation and Assessment. One of the most important tasks in FCM operations is preparation. To properly prepare the DOD, USG agencies and organizations, as well as foreign governments, will have to accomplish the following tasks. First, they will need a collaborative information and planning environment to establish a shared view of the incident response. Second, the GCCs and all other players involved in FCM operations will need to work together to develop a command and control structure that integrates and coordinates all the moving parts of FCM operations. Third, GCCs must conduct rehearsals in their respective areas of responsibility to clearly define roles and responsibilities that will enable connectivity, training and doctrine. Finally, preparation must integrate the multitude of analogous capabilities (first responder equipment, personal decontamination supplies, and healthcare resources) to maximize effectiveness.

Assessment will usually take place once a WMD event has occurred, although in some cases pre-incident early warning and analysis may allow for the assessment to take place prior the WMD event. Rapid response is crucial when dealing with a WMD event.

The DOS in its LFA role will deploy the Foreign Emergency Support Team (FEST) within four hours of an incident. Once on scene, the FEST will be the DOS initial representative who will provide assessment of the emergency, advice on how best to respond, and assist in managing subsequent operations. This initial assessment will provide the foundation for ensuing FCM operations. Once the operation begins continual assessment will be required to measure operational effectiveness.

Logistics. Without an adequate and effective logistical infrastructure FCM operations cannot be supported or sustained.²⁴ Thus, it is crucial that the DOS as the LFA provide adequate guidance to the DOD and other USG agencies on the system that will be developed to provide the necessary logistics across the entire area of operations.²⁵ Operational leaders must ensure that transportation will be available to get the necessary supplies and personnel to the incident site; that the proper medical supplies will be accessible for the treatment of the sick and dying; and that temporary storage facilities will be on hand to position all the necessary food, water, medical supplies and engineering equipment that will eventually be needed.

Medical Resolutions. The medical resolution for WMD attacks will be complex and difficult to solve. Medical resolutions will cover a broad spectrum of categories, from treatment to quarantine to mortuary affairs. ²⁶ Each of these categories must be addressed at the operational level and a system must be designed to treat the victims, properly handle the human remains, and educate the public at large about the threats they face. The GCC will need to identify a senior medical surgeon that has the experience and leadership qualities to deal with such a complex and difficult situation.

Public Affairs. Foreign consequence management operations will be "won or lost on CNN," because perception will become reality immediately following a WMD attack.²⁷ At the operational level, the GCC must ensure his PAO/IO staff are fully coordinated with and in support of DOS-established themes, messages and dissemination efforts to prevent public panic and civil unrest in the affected areas. The psychological effect a WMD attack will have may not be easy to measure; therefore the right message will need to be available for mass consumption. This message, if constructed properly, will facilitate FCM operations by calming public fear of the unknown.

The Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident in 1986 illustrates why public affairs will be critical in influencing the psychology of humans. Immediately after the Chernobyl accident, there were very large estimates for the number of deaths that would occur. The final result was forty-two dead and not all were from radiation exposure. This is an extremely small number considering the fallout was 400 times that of the Hiroshima bomb. Thus, the medical and human consequences from the Chernobyl accident were not as severe as the psychological impact. If a proper public affairs program had been in place this accident may have been viewed as unfortunate but manageable.

Security. In FCM operations agencies and organizations will need security to perform their tasks.³¹ The security function is one that the military is uniquely equipped to provide, and the GCC and his staff should work closely with the DOS to determine before FCM operations commence who (U.S or foreign military) will provide the security function.³² A plan must be created that establishes both the U.S. and foreign militaries' roles and responsibilities with regard to the security function.

Command, Control and Coordination. The litany of participants that will be involved in FCM operations underscores the importance for effective command, control and coordination. The 1995 Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system is a prime example of why this operational function is critical. The subway trains continued to run for an hour and a half after the initial release of the Sarin gas partly because the different agencies responding to the disaster did not communicate with one another.³³ If a more structured and less stovepiped command, control and coordination system had been in place, the subway trains could have been stopped sooner, lowering exposure to the gas. Only by working together and establishing an effective command, control, and coordination network can all parties reach the desired end state of FCM operations.³⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the complex nature of FCM operations it is vitally important that they not be conducted on an *ad hoc* basis. They must be extensively planned for, exercised and trained to well before execution. The following are a few recommendations of how FCM operations can be successful in the future.

JIATF-FCM. The Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) concept is nothing new; in fact, JIATF-South has been conducting counterdrug operations in the U.S. Southern Command Area of Responsibility for over 20 years. The JIATF concept is designed to produce unity of effort between a wide range of governmental and international organizations. JIATF-South is the model for bringing the most effective assets to bear on complex national issues. Foreign consequence management is arguably a complex national issue, so it would make sense to use the JIATF model when developing a framework for a similar organization to address FCM operations. A JIATF-FCM would integrate all

agencies, organizations and foreign governments into a comprehensive command structure to facilitate FCM operations. This command structure would establish trust, develop meaningful relationships, and encourage information sharing between everybody involved in these complex operations.³⁷ The value of a JIATF-FCM will not be evident overnight; it could take many years to establish the trust and relationships required to build a successful organization dedicated to mitigating the effects of a WMD attack. Consequently, given the critical value this organization would lend to FCM operations, it needs to be established sooner than later.

Secondly, the current Joint Task Force (JTF) structure does not facilitate the required planning, coordination, or support of FCM operations. JTF structures are based on the traditional Napoleonic method of organization, which establishes functional centers that are responsible for specific operational tasks. This creates a manpower heavy organization that employs a large footprint and an insatiable hunger for scarce communications and logistics assets. Worse yet, the functional centers make timely execution and decision making nearly impossible, and when responding to a WMD attack time is of the essence. A JIATF-FCM would integrate operational functions and facilitate cooperation between all involved.

Finally, time management, rapid collection and dissemination of information and unity of effort among dissimilar players are critical in FCM operations.⁴¹ Accordingly, an organization needs to be established that will support decentralized, but coordinated, execution of operations.⁴² This type of organization will be the key to success in any FCM effort.

A JIATF-FCM could be designed with three conceptual rings: a center ring composed of the HN decision makers; a second ring containing senior level experts, grouped into

functional/discipline specific cells; and a third ring comprised of mostly senior military (JIATF commander and deputy) leaders who would merely observe and provide guidance as required (see Figure 1).⁴³ This three ringed concept would provide for the HN to assume the overarching lead role in the decision making process. DOS would be in the second ring allowing them to assume the USG LFA role. The military component of the JIATF-FCM would be positioned in the third ring, facilitating their supporting role. The center and second ring would be positioned in an open forum type setting to facilitate information exchange and decision making.⁴⁴ The third ring would be positioned so that they could observe and provide guidance as it was needed.⁴⁵

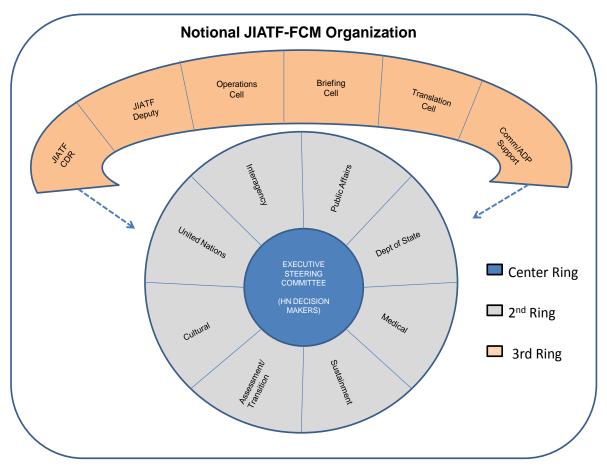


Figure 1.46 Notional JIATF-FCM Organizational Chart

One of the arguments against creating this type of organization is that the center ring consists almost entirely of HN personnel and the affected HN may not have the technical capacity or willingness to successfully plan and execute FCM operations. Nevertheless, establishing and exercising this type of organization now will help develop the foreign government relationships necessary to allow the HN to play the lead role in managing WMD attacks on its soil. In fact, if a JIATF-FCM can be developed and proven successful through robust exercises, foreign governments will begin to understand how to address these complex problems and may require less U.S. assistance in the first place.

Training and Exercises. The cornerstone to any successful operation is having properly trained personnel, and this will be particularly important in FCM operations. Currently, the disparate organizations involved in FCM operations have stovepiped training curriculums that inhibit communication and coordination. A certification process may be one solution to streamlining training and integrating the different organizations involved.⁴⁷

This certification process would begin to standardize the responses to WMD consequences, while fostering relationship building between the different interagency organizations. For this standardization to begin, the DOS as the LFA will need to bring together the many government and non-government agencies to determine the "how, why, what and where" of the process. While this may be difficult to accomplish, it will ultimately be a critical step in creating the long lasting relationships that will lead to successful FCM operations.

Another key for success in responding to WMD attacks is to conduct focused and meaningful exercises. Often the military conducts exercises designed to obtain certain "checks in the boxes." This defeats the true purpose of conducting exercises: to hone skills

and learn from mistakes. No operational commander wants to be responsible for a mistake that tells the world they were not properly prepared, and this mindset often leads to operational planners building exercises with too many notional players. Instead of creating a litany of notional players, the GCCs and their staffs should invite these players to participate in the exercise. If all parties tasked to conduct FCM operations are involved in the exercises, a solid foundation of unity of effort can be established prior to the call to action.

It will be argued that the military, in conjunction with the interagency and certain foreign entities is conducting these types of exercises already. While this may be true, such exercises are not sufficiently robust, realistic, or inclusive to properly prepare for FCM operations. Tabletop exercises (TTX) like the one hosted by National Defense University in 2009 are a good start. These TTX are designed to facilitate Combatant Commands (COCOMs) applying existing FCM plans and capabilities.⁴⁹ More exercises like this are needed so operational commanders can learn from the mistakes encountered in a benign exercise environment and not repeat them when an actual WMD attack occurs.

Interagency Doctrine. The establishment of interagency doctrine for FCM operations would help to streamline the overlapping roles and responsibilities of the dozens of USG agencies that would be involved in these types of complex operations. Development of this interagency doctrine will have to be accomplished multilaterally across the entire spectrum of USG agencies and the military can play a leading role with its doctrinal expertise. ⁵⁰

In fact, JP 3-41, *CBRNE Consequence Management*, could be a solid starting point for developing an interagency doctrine for FCM operations. JP 3-41 has an entire chapter dedicated to FCM operations and could be used to identify who will be required to give input into this interagency doctrinal publication. The DOS is currently working on an FCM annex

to the National Security Presidential Directive-17 (NSPD) that will eventually be a valuable resource during development of this new doctrine. The FCM annex specifies an FCM working group responsible for developing regional and country FCM goals, developing a USG FCM Response Playbook, and a drafting manual on FCM conditions for success.⁵¹ These products create a more focused approach to FCM operations and can be the foundation for creating an interagency doctrine for FCM operations. Finally, creating interagency doctrine for FCM operations will bring together all the pertinent agencies and organizations required to perform FCM operations. This "meeting of the minds" can only enhance the relationship building that will provide unity of effort when conducting FCM operations.

Of course, the CJCS has already published many joint publications that deal with interagency issues. These doctrinal publications discuss the different organizations and agencies, their unique capabilities, and a need for operational level coordination, but they fail to provide specific guidance on how this coordination will be accomplished.⁵²

Strategic Public Affairs Program. One of the key pillars of an effective FCM program is deterrence. A strategic public affairs program can be used to not only educate the general public, but also possible perpetrators of WMD events, about the efforts being conducted to rapidly mitigate the consequences of a WMD attack. If our enemies believe a WMD attack will not change the daily routine, they will be more apt to avoid this avenue to achieve their objectives. Today's 24/7 news cycle is a great conduit for deterrence. If FOX News is embedded in a FCM operational exercise and captures just how successful the operation is, future WMD users may be deterred and we may never have to deal with the unthinkable event.

Admittedly, this is much easier said than done. Developing a strategic public affairs program for FCM operations will have to take into account what the host nation is willing to disclose about any exercise or actual WMD event that takes place on their sovereign soil. In today's environment of the "information superhighway," USG officials must be careful about what information they divulge to the American media, so as not to unintentionally undermine the intentions of the HN.⁵³ However, this should not, under any circumstances, prevent the USG from effectively planning for FCM operations.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

The United States has a vested interest in FCM, and the DOD must put forth a substantial effort to properly prepare for what is considered an unthinkable event. FCM operations have many unique characteristics that are not found in many military operations and operational leaders must understand these characteristics so that they can more effectively work towards unity of effort in FCM. Even though the DOD has taken some measures to prepare for FCM and is now beginning to aggressively attack this complex problem, there is still much to be done to ensure the GCC is properly prepared to conduct successful FCM operations. Creating a JIATF-FCM, conducting focused and meaningful training and exercises, establishing interagency doctrine, and developing a strategic public affairs program will all help the DOD and the GCCs optimally prepare for FCM operations. Better preparation prior to a WMD attack will promote greater unity of effort and will save time when minutes or hours can make the difference between life and death.

NOTES

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